

NewDigitalAge

a  **bluestripe** publication

Launching a trade title when you are a communications agency might not seem the most obvious move but it's one that has worked really well over the last two years.

Every agency has a blog and the ubiquitous podcast, but we wanted to do something very different. We wanted to create an editorial platform, not only for our clients but also for some of the biggest names in the industry. Given our backgrounds in the trade publishing sector - a combined 40 years at titles such as New Media Age, The Drum, Media Briefing, Digiday and Mobile Marketing - it was also imperative that we built a credible editorial proposition and a title that was a great addition to the media landscape.

We've always been very clear that we don't see ourselves as being in competition with the bigger established names in the sector. We don't have a focus on news and we focus tightly on a defined area of the market - the intersection of tech providers, agencies and publishers.

We believe that those who work in the industry are those best placed to write about the industry, and thus the majority of our content is supplied by regular columnists such as Dora Michail-Clendinnen of The Ozone Project, Akama Davies of Xaxis, Harmony Murphy of eBay and, of course, the enigma that is Media Lad.

We are passionate about giving a voice to names that you might not have heard of. Our Practice Makes Unperfect course has supplied us with more than 80 new female contributors who've written columns for us and taken part in podcasts. And recently, NDA editor Justin Pearse made the pledge to endeavour to ensure we always have a 50/50 split in male/female contributed articles.

The last two years have been a bit of a whirlwind for New Digital Age. We've learned a lot about remote publishing, we've redesigned the site, launched a sister title in Ecommerce Age, and in November will host our first big event, The Trinity Lunch. We like to think that we've succeeded in our original aims and hope you do, too.

We're always happy to hear your views and ideas, so don't hesitate to get in touch.

welcome

Welcome to the New Digital Age MAD//fest special edition. We're big fans of MAD//Fest at NDA. They share the same ethos as us in celebrating the amazing technology, people and innovation that drives our industry.

In the following pages you'll see of this in a snapshot of some of the content that has graced the pages recently of NDA (www.newdigitalage.co) and our latest title, Ecommerce Age (www.ecommerceage.co.uk).

We're even more excited than normal about being MAD//Fest's media partner at this summer's event, the first time the industry that we love has been brought back together in person at the show.

The digital media and marketing industry is powered by the amazing people that build, lead and staff the companies that make it such an exciting place to work and it's incredibly exciting to be finally back together.

We'll be covering this year's MAD//Fest in the coming weeks, helping the event live on.

NDA is a publication by the industry for the industry and we'd love to hear from you if you're interested in sharing your thoughts on this year's event and the industry as a whole, so please get in touch:

editorial@newdigitalage.co.uk



Justin Pearse
Editor
New Digital Age

contents

- 4 Programmatic Stars
- 5 My Digital Hero
- 6 Think globally, market locally
- 8 Is this the death of industry awards?
- 9 Progress is impossible without change
- 10 Is publisher first-party data the new gold standard for advertisers?
- 12 Practice Makes Unperfect
- 16 Neurodiversity: an untapped talent pool for tech
- 17 Brands have been sleep-talking for too long. 2021 needs to be the year they wake up
- 19 The launch of EcommerceAge. A title for a new era
- 20 What high street retailers can learn from online brands to adapt to the new pace of retail
- 22 My Ecommerce Hero
- 24 Bluestripe Group: building a new model for media and communications



What makes the trailblazers and innovators holding the Head of Programmatic role tick?

Liting Spalding is Head of Audience Planning & Programmatic at Havas Media Group. She joined Havas in 2019 from Mindshare

What is the biggest opportunity for programmatic over the next year?

The biggest opportunity lies in elevating programmatic from a single channel into an integrated solution across the rest of digital and wider media.

It's very exciting to see that a lot of brands are looking at digital as a dynamic space and injecting this approach into planning to deliver truly meaningful results.

I expect a big focus on addressable audiences within programmatic and TV. There is a lot that marketers could learn from the old TV days about establishing a truly one-to-one relationship with consumers and audiences.

What are the biggest challenges for programmatic and how will we overcome them?

Our biggest challenge is to leverage the rapid change in technology and policies. Agencies need to ensure our approach is future-proofed so that we have a consistent but agile approach to product development, and that we encourage organic competition within the ecosystem.

What do you love most about your role as Head of Programmatic?

It empowers me to make effective and efficient changes to the business, the team and the industry. It's great to

have access to vast resources and support, as well as being able to identify opportunities and turn them into outcomes as promptly as possible.

What is your proudest achievement in programmatic?

I'm beginning to find my life purpose through marketing, something that I don't say lightly. It's about driving business outcomes while doing the right thing, and recognising the values and purpose we share with our clients and partners.

I have an exceptional team, wonderful colleagues, and a supportive network to make positive changes. This is the beginning of a journey towards responsible and sustainable marketing. We have a long way to go, but it's never too late to start making changes.

How is the role of 'head of programmatic' evolving or changing at present?

It's now a role that requires a programmatic skillset with a non-programmatic mindset.

A good programmatic head should be a mentor for their team, a strong communicator, an innovator, a quick learner, a people person, a doer who doesn't mind getting their hands dirty, and a leader who is committed to turning great ideas into action.



My digital hero

The digital industry is supported by technology but is conceived, created and developed by people, who are the heroes of digital. But who are their heroes?

Tina Lakhani is Head of Adtech at the IAB. She works with the IAB Tech Lab to help collaboration within the adtech community

Who is your digital hero?

This is such a tough question because working at the IAB means that I have the great fortune of working with some of the greatest minds our industry has to offer. If I have to choose, Chloe Grutchfield, Co-Founder of RedBud.

What has she done to win hero status in your eyes?

Not only is her robust understanding of the industry incredible, but my experience of working with Chloe during lockdown has set her apart as my digital hero. Like many other parents, she spent lockdown balancing her daily work with being a parent, and quite frankly I have never seen someone multi-task so well!

Chloe is one of the most kickass talents I've come across in our industry, and to me is a prime example of a woman – and a working mum – who is achieving great things in the world of adtech, which tends to be quite a male-dominated industry.

How has her heroism helped drive digital?

For me, Chloe is an inspiration and trailblazer for women in our industry. The technology that she and her co-founder, Rhys Denny have created helps digital advertisers respect consumer privacy and choice. Getting this right will help us to build a sustainable future for the open, ad-funded internet.

What are the biggest challenges in digital we need another hero to solve?

A lot of the challenges we face within the digital ad industry come down to measurement and the unrealistic measurement of KPIs. To get the most out of digital we need to make sure the right measurement metrics are in place.

At the IAB, we continue to work to address and solve this issue, however my future vote for a digital hero will go to the person that comes along to champion this issue for the industry!

What is your most heroic personal achievement so far in digital?

Running [the agency] glue London back in the day – we did some awesome fresh, innovative and inspiring work, thanks to some amazingly talented people!

Think globally, market locally

How Boots, Just Eat, RoC Skincare, A-Plan, CvE and Made.com are adapting

New Digital Age, in partnership with Control v Exposed (CvE), hosted a roundtable of marketing heavyweights to discuss the renewed role of local marketing in a post-Covid world, and to consider which of the recent shifts in strategy towards local targeting are likely to survive beyond lockdown. NDA editor Justin Pearse and CvE President in Europe & Asia, Paul Frampton, were joined by: **Matt Bushby, UK Marketing Director at Just Eat; Pete Markey, CMO of Boots UK & Ireland; Jane Savage, Head of Marketing and Ecommerce EMEA at RoC Skincare International; Alastair Pegg, Group CMO at A-Plan Insurance; and Matt Pollington, Marketing Director at Made.com.**

CvE's Frampton set the scene for the conversation, recounting his own company's pandemic experience to date. He said: "A few years ago, we decided to invest in hyperlocal marketing, in terms of building a machine learning solution that allows digital activity to be turned on by local franchises or local area managers. There was a growing trend towards 'local' in marketing plans before

the pandemic but, since it hit, interest in our solution has erupted."

Pete Markey, who joined Boots recently from challenger bank brand TSB, said: "With Covid, the need to know what's open in your locality has become more important than ever. Likewise, in physical stores, customers have a new set of expectations – hand sanitiser, social distancing, mask wearing and so on. We're lucky at Boots: as an essential service, we've remained open throughout the pandemic, but for a lot of other retailers the next few months will be about how to coax people back into stores again. I expect local marketing to play a big role in that.

"There needs to be a closer relationship between what you're doing online, how you provide deeper levels of interactions for customers in-store, and what's happening locally."

Balancing act

While predominantly known as an online furniture and homeware retailer, Made.com also operates a number of showrooms in major cities, which have had to close

during lockdown. Made.com's Pollington said: "Losing the ability to touch and feel our products was difficult for a segment of our customer base, so we've created a system of digital appointments, one-to-one consultations with our sales agents in our stores, which has been really popular. One interesting side-effect of the lockdown, from our perspective, is that customers have actually become more patient.

"Eighteen months ago, we would have been talking about the customer expectation for fast fulfilment in the furniture business. Our experience is that consumers are now prepared to wait longer for furniture products to be delivered than before, which is fascinating."

Discussing the changes forced on the beauty and cosmetics business, Savage said: "From a marketing perspective, you want efficient media and that means achieving a level of scale. It becomes very difficult to know: how local do you want to go? Independent



It's about finding that optimal mix between national and local activity that drives the business

pharmacies are a very important part of our distribution network so we've been using local marketing to support them throughout the crisis.

"For example, we've been launching certain product ranges exclusively through independent pharmacies and supplying them with far more samples for customers to take away. We're also trying to capitalise on the acceleration of ecommerce in markets where we don't have a strong bricks-and-mortar presence, so it's a constant balancing act to make your media money work hard for both local independents and more central ecommerce."

Local knowledge

Pegg explained that, as A-Plus Insurance Group operates a network of 105 insurance brokers across England, it already had a clear role to play in the local communities it serves: "Our branches are empowered to be part of their local community, so we have a slightly different approach, whether that means having a relationship with the local rugby club or local business networking group. The question is: how do you scale that activity to make it work in a coordinated way?"

"Post-lockdown, those local business forums became digital, so we have had to adapt to the changing nature of networking locally to be more digital too. We've made sure we got involved online to connect to those groups we ordinarily would have done face-to-face."

Bushby of Just Eat pointed out the crucial importance of customer data to its localisation strategy. He said: "We've tried to use our first-party data in an intelligent enough way to power some of the decisions we make at a local level. In London, for example, we look at things at a borough-by-borough level and make decisions on where we need to invest more or pull back.

"We launched the entire McDonald's estate on Just Eat at a time when we were in the highest level of lockdown. Normally, Out of Home would have been a key channel and we'd be concentrating media around stores, so we had to approach the launch in a very different way. That challenged some of the preconceptions we held previously, particularly around working with third parties, which we're doing more of now."

CvE's Frampton summed up: "It's about finding that optimal mix between national and local activity that drives the business. Depending on which business you're in, that can be a very complex task. I think, post-pandemic, there will still be a big opportunity for brands to use technology and develop different service models to leverage local marketing much more effectively."

Is this the death of industry awards?

Akama Davies is Director, Global Solutions and Innovation at Xaxis, and NDA's new monthly columnist



I've been fortunate to experience awards through several lenses, both as a judge and an entrant, from winning highs to award night disappointment. Throughout this time,

I heard many industry peers' take on the material benefit of industry awards – or lack thereof.

Why do awards still matter?

During the pandemic, many businesses have needed to create cost efficiencies and therefore only focus on essential expenditure. Awards budgets have suffered. Added to this, all gala-style events were cancelled. It felt like the award experience was a relic.

However, upon deeper scrutiny of what awards actually provide entrants and winners, this perspective is somewhat one-dimensional.

Success > Survival

Awards provide much-needed opportunities to pause and celebrate successes over just survival, allowing us to step outside our firefighting bubbles and celebrate the best our industry has to offer. Writing award entries doesn't have to be either difficult or time-consuming, but it does take focus and planning, promoting, collaboration and crisp communication.

The exercise itself forces the business to reflect and express value succinctly as the nature and standard of award submissions require accuracy, brevity, and clarity.

Do it for our people

Awards create career breakthroughs. They provide unique platforms to showcase the talent and work independently without specific barriers caused by internal dynamics.

The ability to test ourselves against the best with an impartial adjudicator providing objective feedback can only help us improve. It forces us to look from a different perspective and compare ourselves with competitors across multiple aspects, from strategy to technology, innovation, inclusion, service, and talent. Awards help us think of how we could be doing things differently and better. By incentivising and including the wider team, it encourages everyone to get behind the process.

Do it for our clients

A famous client is a happy client. Awards not only allow us to benchmark work for ourselves but also for our clients. A winning entry should have client-centricity in every component. Winners should demonstrate their transformative impact on a client's desired outcomes over and above target campaign KPIs.

The coverage and buzz awards can create around your offerings help you get front-of-mind for new and existing clients alike. I've personally employed this approach when launching performance products to significant effect, with the added credibility helping to secure new business by setting us apart from the competition.

Awards, for me, are not about the gala nights or fancy dinners; they are about recognition of success. Awards provide brighter pathways for everyone.

Progress is impossible without change



Dora Michail-Clendinnen is Chief Strategy Officer at The Ozone Project and NDA's monthly columnist

It seems that the only constant in digital advertising at the moment is change. Whether that's driven by advertisers, regulators, browsers or publishers, the overarching theme – once we look past the panic and scramble for meaning – is one of positive progress. With this in mind, we launched the 'Better Future Series'.

Sarah Treliving – Digital, Data and Technology Director at Goodstuff – joined me and Ozone CTO Scott Switzer to focus on identity in digital advertising.

Reimagine measurement

Now is the time to think about success in ways other than pure direct response or end of customer journey metrics. A focus on long-term value rather than short-term sales will become not only necessary, but also more effective for advertisers. For as long as we rely on the third-party cookie for online measurement, we will continue to prioritise performance metrics over brand-building.

We discussed the type of innovation that will emerge in measuring campaign performance using groups, context and device data rather than user-level data, as well as panel-based contributions. There will be a shift from clicks and conversion-based metrics and a focus on brand fame and influence.

Respect the people behind the data

Respect – alongside fairness, accountability and transparency – was a core principle of the WFA data ethics paper that was published last year. It is very easy to talk about "user data" and metrics and forget that there are actually people sitting behind the statistics. This is surely the most important relationship for the supply and demand side of our business; and while the way we are operating today satisfies the regulators and gives advertising practitioners legal consent to broadcast user data across the ad ecosystem, in the context of all of the privacy debates today and those to come in the future, if we're honest with ourselves, we haven't designed a truly privacy-first solution just yet.

If it's good for the user, it's good for business

A better user experience means more attentive users, leading to better advertising engagement and a more valuable exchange between consumers, advertisers and publishers.

Previously, this created the wrong incentives for premium publishers and this meant that ad revenue was prioritised over the user experience. The publishers who recognised this and prioritised the user above all else have seen great success with reader-first strategies and fewer ads.

The discussion ended with us considering what should come next for advertisers and publishers. There was an agreement that publishers and advertisers are the custodians of user data, and revisiting what consent they have is a matter of priority.

Is publisher first-party data the new gold standard for advertisers?

With the demise of the third-party cookie, publishers' first-party data is heralded as the new gold standard for advertisers. So we asked them to prove it

New Digital Age partnered with audience platform Permutive to launch 'The Pitch', a *Dragons' Den*-style contest where publishers had to prove to a panel of agencies that their first-party data offering could deliver campaigns on client KPIs without the use of any third-party data.

The event saw representatives from the Choueiri Group, Dazed Media, The Guardian, and Hello! present to 'Dragons' Caroline Moffat, Digital Director at Starcom; Dan Calladine, Head of Media Future at Carat; Morys Ireland, Head of Data and Technology Services at Mindshare; and Liting Spalding, Head of Audience Planning and Programmatic at Havas.

The publishers were grilled on every aspect of their solutions and what they were claiming to be able to deliver. And, for the most part, they were all able to overcome the challenges presented to them with confidence.

Havas's Spalding praised all the publishers for having "great preparation and presentation, with passion for the technology. They really believed in the products, and it was not just a sales pitch.

"Agencies are very excited about potential cookieless solutions and it was great to see publishers driving those solutions. It was a great test to see how they would react in those situations – and some certainly rose to it."

The Choueiri Group, the Middle East's leading media representation group, were the first to (virtually) step in front of the esteemed judging panel, showing off the data segments they are able to create across the more than 40 web portals they represent.

"The work to bring together so many publishers and titles across their region was very impressive, it would be great to be able to tap into something like that in the UK," commented Mindshare's Ireland. "They clearly had the tech infrastructure and data offering and, if we were able to, we would certainly look at following up with them."

Next, Dazed entered to face the fire – and left with the recognition of being dubbed "the best of the day" by Carat's Calladine.

The millennial and Gen Z-focused publisher –

which has worked with brands including Nike, Burberry, Tinder, Adidas, Ford, Gucci, and Channel 4, to name a few – showcased its unique audience and ability to marry creativity and first-party data, which Dazed has grown by 63% in the past year.

"Their breadth of first-party data has increased as they have expanded their Dazed network, and includes hard-to-reach Gen Z social activism and beauty segments. This coupled with their ability to develop a creative idea aligned to data segments and their audience is extremely powerful," said Starcom's Moffat. "They displayed strong knowledge of their consumer, and it's clear that they work hard to instil authenticity into Dazed.

"I immediately identified a client which is a perfect fit for their Gen Z audience and would love to test the effectiveness of their own first-party data on a future campaign."

Third up was the 200-year-old brand The Guardian – one of the UK's biggest newsbrands. It shared how, on top of having 100% visibility of its audience via first-party cookies, it also benefits from its 'Pulse'

tool, which enables the publisher to see what content is being read in real-time and allows it to identify surging content, then overlay it with first-party audience data.

The Guardian also provided insight into its work with Permutive around ad effectiveness, which showed that first-party data delivers 65% higher brand uplift.

"[They had] a well-versed pitch, with a strong offering backed up by case studies and metrics that matter, such as attention and brand lift," said Moffat.

"I was impressed by their audience insights capability using their 1P data, which can be applied not only to the campaign but also to other elements such as creative and overall strategy."

The show was closed by celebrity and human interest-focused publisher Hello!, which manages to reach a third of women in the UK. The publisher collects data via a combination of IBM Watson, polls, and ecommerce triggers. It has also carried out an internal project called 'Drumbeat' to measure the true power of its first-party data.



Practice Makes Unperfect

Practice Makes UnPerfect is about honing that natural voice and joining a community of women who want to be themselves on stage, on air, and even written down. Our groups will go on a journey of self-discovery that's designed to help you understand your barriers, understand other people, work out what you want to say to the world, and how.



We've partnered with Amy Kean to create a one-of-a-kind six-week training course that mixes psychology with role play and media training. It combines storytelling techniques with podcasting, blog writing and presenting, as well as community-building, and having fun.

I hired a confidence coach once. It cost a lot of money, but desperate times call for desperate measures: I was working in Asia reporting into an insecure and inadequate boss who lashed out and undermined instead of working on his own professional development.

I'd wager about 70% of people reading this have been in exactly the same situation. It's not easy to talk about, because we've been programmed to believe that if other people treat us badly it makes us weak. Somehow, lesser. The claustrophobic dynamics of a bad employer/employee relationship can impact your brain, your body (stress is an illness with physical side effects) and your long-term sense of self. So as a precautionary measure, I invested in a confidence coach to make sure I didn't break.

The coaching was an interesting experience. I got hypnotised! We talked about the little voices in our heads - The 'Chimp' - and how one can only control one's own reaction to things, so it is important to stop trying to change others. In one session, my confidence coach delivered an immortal line I'll never forget: "Some people... will always be arseholes. Deal with it."

I dealt with it. When my confidence was sufficiently rebuilt I found another job, and left. Handing in my notice felt like a cool shower on a hot day. A release! A revival! The ROI of that financial decision, and the allocation of my own personal funds, was exceptional.

A number of my learnings and life experiences have been channeled into Practice Makes UnPerfect: a course designed to help people finesse their public voices and be themselves more. Like you, but extra you. You squared!

So all the bad stuff: the dents on my confidence, the shitty unsolicited feedback, the fear of putting myself out there, the social media trolls, my own relationship with my nerves (which I've learned will always exist) have been put to good use. For two hours a week for six weeks, we practice public speaking, writing, podcasting, sitting on panels... we even practice fucking up... so that participants find out how it feels, and that things are rarely as bad as you think they'll be.

Practice Makes UnPerfect has been described by alumni as "transformative" and "life-changing" and "essential." (Without any prompting from me, I promise!) The course is mostly for women, and an inevitable, extremely pleasant side effect is that it boosts their confidence. PMU increases their desire to get out there and start speaking. Shouting! And that, for me, is an invaluable outcome.

However, I'm often asked to put a value on it. I talk to many, many companies about Practice Makes UnPerfect because it's unique, and a number of business leaders are interested in 'empowering' (hate that word) women. So I'll run through the process and benefits and sometimes I'll be asked: what's the business case for this?

Hang on. What's the business case for investing in your staff and boosting their confidence? The first time I heard it, this felt like a strange, clinical question, at odds with my heart and soul. Dramatic? Very. But I thought we'd moved past those conversations now: conversations about whether your staff should be happy, fulfilled, challenged, and rewarded.

To some of these companies I could respond with: what's the business case for blowing £3k on a client lunch, or £30k on a boozy trip to Cannes? One thing we've realised over the last 12 months is that these radical social occasions aren't the only way to keep your clients engaged. Doing the work well is also a massive plus.

But from a business case perspective, there are few ways you can benefit from more confident women. They're happier at work (presenteeism costs the UK economy £73 billion per year); they're amazing spokespeople for your company (which can be calculated via a PR metric like AVE); they're better

storytellers and communicators which results in stronger client relationships; and they stay. They stay at your company because you've demonstrated that you care about their development.

Wouldn't you love to be able to say to future employees: "Come for the job title and salary, stay for the ongoing investment we make into the self-esteem of our staff." But not every company can say this. Can you?

According to the innovations company &us, almost a fifth of people say the bravest decision they've made at work is to leave. After I spent months with a confidence coach, that was my bravest decision, too.

To retain your female employees; give them the mic, space to speak, to develop their opinions, and to help them practice pushing the whole industry forward, is a pretty solid company perk, if you ask me. Delivering a lifetime's supply of confidence isn't just a 'business case', it's a healthy dose of humanity, too.

We welcome enquiries from both individuals and companies about places on the PMU courses. We are also able to offer courses for single companies

For more information please contact
PMU@bluestripegroup.co.uk

Bluestripe Content Studios

Working with its own in-house creative team and a network of specialist suppliers, Bluestripe Content Studios delivers against the most complex and challenging content briefs. Content is an essential tool in modern B2B communications to drive leads and showcase your work. Waze, Snap, Xandr, LiveRamp, Broadsign and many others have trusted Bluestripe with their branded content.

*All zebras' stripe patterns are unique.
 Because who wants to look like everybody else?*



To learn more, contact
james.mcgowan@bluestripegroup.co.uk

Neurodiversity: an untapped talent pool for tech



By Sarah Cometa,
Technology Consultant

I first “came out” as neurodiverse to my employer, about my ADHD, in April of 2019. I was in a quarterly business review. We had to fill out a slide that asked: “What do your colleagues need to know about you, to work best with you?”

When I started to respond, I realised the summation of all I was writing could be put into one sentence:

They need to know I have ADHD.

I was very lucky that at the time I had many supportive colleagues, and was met with words of encouragement. But this was the first time I’d openly talked about it in a work setting.

Despite the rosy image the tech industry paints around diversity and inclusion, those working in the industry know this is far from reality.

Neurodiverse people at work still face significant stigma and problems “fitting in” – if they manage to pass the recruitment process. It’s estimated that 15% of the population of the UK is neurodivergent, with some figures putting unemployment in this group at 80%.

There’s also discomfort at the management level. A study from the Institute of Leadership & Management

in 2020 revealed that 50% of employers would not hire a neurodiverse candidate, with the highest level of bias shown towards those with Tourette’s syndrome and ADHD/ADD.

While supporting neurodiversity at work seems great for PR and represents an egalitarian ideal, that doesn’t actually motivate employers, because employers are motivated by the bottom line.

We all know that diverse teams perform better than non-diverse teams. When you look at why, the answer is simple: diverse teams are able to bring different perspectives to the table which allow for more creativity and problem-solving. Business need people who think differently – the literal definition of the neurodiverse community!

Many people with neurodiverse disorders have higher-than-average abilities. Research shows that some conditions, including autism and dyslexia, can bestow special skills in pattern recognition, memory, or mathematics.

So why haven’t more companies been able to take advantage of neurodiverse candidates, where the unemployment rate is still so high?

The truth is: most companies still have an ideal type. A former boss called this “executive presence”, which was really just a way of screening employees that didn’t act in a way he expected.

Throwing out a typical “standard” of how someone needs to behave in order to be successful is the first step to truly incorporating this talent into the workforce.

Does it matter if someone starts work at 10am every morning, as long as they provide consistent value to your business? If an individual is unable to maintain eye contact when speaking but is able to solve problems no one else can, where’s the problem?

Don’t expect your employees to “come out” to you. The fact is, they shouldn’t need to. Instead, ask them what changes could be made to allow them to do their best work. And make those changes.

Brands have been sleep-talking for too long. 2021 needs to be the year they wake up.



By Camille Verniolle,
Sales Director at
WeTransfer

As a consumer (and a ‘creative’), I sometimes feel disappointed and betrayed by brands. For many years I’ve obediently bought products I don’t need. But now – just when I need these brands the most, when we all do – they’re letting us down.

I’m talking about greenwashing. The illusion of doing something good. Collectively and individually, consumer businesses have the power to spark policy changes, behaviour change, to alter perspectives. And yet we see minor improvements to production hyped up beyond belief in multi-million-pound ad campaigns. It seems that many marketers are simply processing and repeating stuff they’ve been told in trends reports. It’s like they’re sleep-talking, and we’re forced to listen.

Most of us are guilty of buying things that contribute to landfill, CO2 emissions and modern-day slavery. It’s hard to get out of that cycle, especially in the face of cheap convenience. I’m guilty of buying those bright

comfy slacks from a fast-fashion brand, instead of spending hours researching eco-friendly, sustainable sweatpants. However, small changes can make a big difference. For example, I go out of my way to try to carry all my groceries in my arms because I refuse to use another plastic bag. And yes, I pay for more expensive (and less soft) toilet paper that is 100% tree-friendly – I’m just that kinda girl!

Being sustainable doesn’t need to mean your business takes a hit. Brands can still be smart about integrating real change from within. Chanel and Burberry are exploring financial avenues to support their commitment to more sustainable practices. As a result, they are issuing what they call sustainability-linked bonds. These are bonds with clauses linked to the companies’ environmental goals, with any proceeds going to investing in startups who are developing alternatives to plastic and leather.

The Kering Group has created an innovative tool for measuring and quantifying the environmental impact of its activities called the Environmental Profit & Loss (EP&L) tool. It measures the carbon emissions, water consumption, air and water pollution, land use and waste production along its entire supply chain. It also helps identify business opportunities to ensure strategic decision-making for the group’s business longevity while minimising environmental impacts. Even better – this is an open-source tool encouraging other peers in the luxury industry and other sectors to adopt it.

I get it: companies are tired!

But so are we: having to navigate this complicated market trying to work out how we’re damaging the planet with every purchase. I’ve been lucky enough to work with brands who are leading the way, while many other brands sleepwalk and sleep talk through our world. But we must be louder about what we expect from brands, whilst celebrating those who are creating change, to wake the lazy ones up once and for all.

Bluestripe Communications

Bluestripe Communications creates and executes PR and media relations campaigns that do more than just deliver coverage, they drive results. Just ask:

News UK

xandr

Teads

N newsworks

Permutive

nextdoor

CVE
CONTROL EXPOSED

+ many more



*The collective noun for a group of zebras is 'Dazzle'.
Just saying...*

The market-leading team for the adtech, media and marketing industries.

To learn more, email
lydia.oakes@bluestripegroup.co.uk

The launch of *EcommerceAge* A new title for a new era

Ecommerce Age, published by Bluestripe Group, is the sister title to New Digital Age. It covers the latest analysis, insight, opinion and research on all aspects of ecommerce. We aim to be a new voice for knowledge and inspiration about the companies, technologies and people powering the next wave of disruption in this most dynamic of industries. We're a subsidiary of Bluestripe Group and will include news and views from our clients and other content we find interesting and that adds value to the ecommerce industry.

The last 16 months have been massive for ecommerce. The pandemic sped up changes across several verticals, and that acceleration is expected to continue as we progress through 2021 and beyond. In our regular conversations with the industry there is such great excitement and enthusiasm about the growth in the ecommerce market that we felt we needed to create a new editorial platform dedicated to the sector.

The title will follow the same model that has made NDA so successful over the last couple of years. Our editorial team will seek insights and analysis from senior figures within the industry, while also working with what we feel are the most interesting up-and-coming companies in the space. As with NDA, we feel that those who work

every day in the industry are the best placed to comment. And also as with NDA, we will insist that any paid content is of the same quality of content we would write ourselves.

As ever with Bluestripe publications, we will be working with high profile figures to make sure that we get right to the heart of the issues that are meaningful to the industry. As such, we're really pleased to be working with Glynn Davis, one of the UK's most knowledgeable and experienced retail journalists, and founder of Retail Insider. We're also happy to announce a partnership with Entropy on our regular feature, My Ecommerce Hero, which shines a light on those that drive this industry forward.

The following pages are examples of the content we're publishing on a daily basis.





What high street retailers can learn from online brands to adapt to the new pace of retail

By Sophia King, Senior Brand Marketing Manager at *Mention Me*

Despite the UK inching ever closer to the end of Covid-19 restrictions, the future looks precarious for our high streets. Instead of a bustling hub of activity, many are now near-deserted, populated by more pigeons than people.

That's not to say, however, that it's all over for the high street. When non-essential shops reopened on 12th April, pent-up consumer demand was evident in the snaking queues outside shops.

It's clear consumer appetite remains. The challenge for multichannel retailers now is to capture – and satisfy – this appetite in a way that keeps customers coming back.

Here are five learnings high street retailers can take from digital brands.

1. Improve your online customer journey

If you were one of the few people still in denial about the future being online, the pandemic likely changed your mind. The brands that ignored the alarm bells saw sales and market share plummet.

Now, acting quickly is crucial to recovery. Put your money where your mouth is and invest in the right resources. Get tools that speak to one another to create slick user experiences, free up your teams through automation, and hire talented professionals with the knowledge and vigour to lead your digital transformation.

Don't be fooled by the queues outside recently reopened brick-and-mortar stores. Consumer behaviour has changed for good – adapting to this is essential to surviving the coming year and beyond.

2. Provide seamless multichannel experiences

High Street retailers shouldn't rely on their physical

now. Offering alternative options is crucial to keeping customers browsing and buying from you.

Once you've mastered the basics of bridging the gap between on and offline, consider how you can further enhance the customer experience. Zara's in-store model, for example, lets customers order, then collect clothes within 30 minutes. In-store, they can use the integrated stock management system to find products viewed online, then reserve fitting rooms to try them on.



Don't be fooled by the queues outside recently reopened brick-and-mortar stores. Consumer behaviour has changed for good – adapting to this is essential to surviving the coming year and beyond

3. Get personal

A truly customer-centric business makes every decision based on their customers, continuously engaging with them to understand their changing needs. The trick is to know what your customers want before they do themselves.

Of course, this is easier said than done. But it's the job of those at the top to re-instil that market-oriented approach and embed it at every level of the business. Once you get to know your customers, create segments of similar customers.

Identify the precise elements of your business that should attract your target customers, then refine your marketing to effectively engage each segment. Use dynamic content to promote products most likely to

resonate with shoppers based on previous purchases. Make it feel personal, whether that shopper is online, in-store, or both.

4. Keep adapting and experimenting

Much of the success of digital-first brands is their agility. Long-term strategy planning undoubtedly has its place, but it can't underpin every campaign. Don't be afraid to test quick and dirty tactics. Invest with minimal overheads, so you have little to lose if the risk doesn't pay off. It might feel daunting, but the biggest risk of all is doing nothing. Wait too long to implement that new strategy, and your online competitors may well have backed you into a corner beyond recovery.

5. Build a community

Human connection is one of the most powerful influences on our behaviour. Tap into this by turning your customers into a community that's rooted in living and sharing your brand purpose with the rest of the world.

Promote your values with unmissable posters in-store; invite customers to real-life meet-ups and group events; bring your values to life in your actions. Offer products and services your customers love, and they'll tell others about it.

Conclusion

In 2021, shops are more than somewhere to try on clothes and complete transactions. They're experiential spaces where consumers can connect with brands that share their values and beliefs.

Take advantage of having both digital and physical channels. Bridge the gap to create seamless customer experiences that stand out. Experiment with how to attract your target customers.

The high street isn't dead; it's different. The businesses that embrace this will thrive.



Entropy, the ecommerce and marketing consultancy, is our exclusive partner for the new series of 'My Ecommerce Hero', which is a regular feature in Ecommerce Age.

As with all our Heroes series across our media titles 'My Ecommerce Hero' celebrates the real heroes of the ecommerce industry: the innovators, trailblazers and disruptors that are building the companies that will define the new era of ecommerce.

Francesca Grillini is Ecommerce Activation Lead at FMCG-giant Reckitt. We find out who her Ecommerce Hero is and, crucially, how her chosen hero has inspired her to make some great improvements to Reckitt's own ecommerce strategy.

Who is your ecommerce hero?

Co-founder and CEO of Sugarfina, Rosie O'Neill and her partner Josh Resnick.

What have they done to win hero status in your eyes?

They followed a dream to start "a candy boutique for grown-ups". Rosie's disruptive mindset and ability to go beyond the status quo enabled her to build a new business model from scratch. She recognised the needs

of an emerging user, seizing unforeseen opportunities in a category that was saturated and perceived as unable to evolve further.

How has their heroism helped drive ecommerce?

Rosie has showcased that it is possible to create a connection with users through a well-designed digital experience. And Rosie kept a personal touch, for example, ensuring that each shipment was delivered with personalised, handwritten notes.

It's inspiring how fluent and well-connected the brand is across all touchpoints. The product is so distinctive and recognisable across all channels.

What are the biggest challenges in ecommerce that we need another hero to solve?

New channels, services, technologies, and new consumer behaviours make the digital environment dynamic and sometimes even chaotic. The amount of data now available and trackable online can be confusing if not properly tracked and framed with clear goals and KPIs.

Brands need to accept and embrace the transformation. Ecommerce can act as a complementary channel to increase penetration and maximise your business. I believe companies should implement internal behaviours and mindsets to encourage enough flexibility, functionality, and agility to always be able to explore new ecommerce-first products and services.

What is your most heroic personal achievement so far in ecommerce?

Inspired by Sugarfina's personalised approach to user experience, my proudest achievement so far has been releasing the first ecommerce guideline and toolkit for Reckitt's internal use – allowing people to elevate our own brand experience.



Liz Salway is Global Audience and Data Lead for Digital Centre of Competencies at Nestlé. She previously worked at companies including Tradedoubler, PubMatic and Mindshare.

Who is your ecommerce hero?

Jon Mayo of inPowered.

What has he done to win hero status in your eyes?

Jon and inPowered truly understand how to blend content into generating outcomes for brands, by using technology to drive users through the funnel to ultimately convert.

How has his heroism helped drive ecommerce?

By understanding and being able to translate the discipline of content marketing and paid media into a meaningful and effective method of engaging users with a brand which more effectively drives conversion.

What are the biggest challenges in ecommerce we need another hero to solve?

Easily the fact that ecommerce as a department is still not truly connected to the rest of paid media.

Within the CPG space, the relationship between the customer (retailer) and the brand has a very different dynamic than when it comes to eRetail.

In addition, the fact that sales are being driven by these third-party retailers divorces the brands from the consumer relationship. This makes it more difficult to gain insights to help drive consumer understanding.

What is your most heroic personal achievement so far in ecommerce?

My digital experience is rooted in performance, and so ultimately for me it's about helping to drive business outcomes for brands.

I suppose I am most proud of the fact that trading teams I have run always met sales objective goals for clients we have worked with and that brands could invest spend knowing we were driving ROAS on their behalf.

“ Within the CPG space, the relationship between the customer (retailer) and the brand has a very different dynamic than when it comes to eRetail ”

Is there a diversity problem in ecommerce and how can we best address it if so?

Honestly not that I have seen. Diversity challenges certainly exist in digital media as a whole but certainly initiatives like ecommerce-speakers.com from Alex Tait' truly address this in a way talking alone does not.

My Ecommerce Hero is a series celebrating brilliance in ecommerce, in association with eCommerce-speakers.com, an initiative from Entropy's Alex Tait to encourage more female speakers at industry events.



ANDY OAKES
Managing Director



LYDIA OAKES
Partner



JUSTIN PEARSE
Partner

Bluestripe Group: Building a new model for media and communications

The founders of Bluestripe Group – owners of New Digital Age – discuss how the business was formed, why the unique model works, and what it means for readers, clients and partners.

How did the business come about?

LYDIA: When Andy left The Drum, having enjoyed helping take the business as far as he felt he could, we looked at setting up a business together. And that's how we founded Bluestripe. We saw a gap in the market. With Andy's background in the marketing and advertising, media, and publishing spaces, and with my background in PR and marketing,

we had the potential to create a really good business. We had it in mind that Justin would join us, which gave us a compelling trio of skillsets. We bring different backgrounds, different approaches, different opinions, and different ways of doing things. And it means we've managed to bring together a really strong team of people across the company, and enabled us to create this unique structure and unique offer.

How does the model work?

LYDIA: We offer PR, we offer content, and we have our own media. That's quite unique. There are some agencies that will have the content side, but they don't have the means of distribution. New Digital Age and Ecommerce Age aren't the only outlets for our clients, but offer an additional media opportunity.

We have a really strong B2B-focused PR team from a variety of backgrounds. We have writers from journalistic backgrounds, who write with that journalistic approach. And the media side enables us to have a voice in the market and be on top of trends and what's really going on. But that's independent from the other two parts of the business.

How is friction managed between the different pillars of the business?

JUSTIN: We always run our media titles as independent operations. We said from day one that we would write about the things we find interesting, that we believe our audience will find valuable. We've always been transparent that we will write about our clients. Our clients are some of the biggest and best companies in the business, so why wouldn't we! At the same time, we will write about our clients' competitors. When I started in journalism 20 years ago, there was no way a publisher could have launched a PR agency. Or a PR agency launch a credible media title. Today, the world is very different and as long as you have respect for your audience and focus on delivering value, a new model like ours works incredibly well.

Why does it work so well?

ANDY: It works because all those things knit together quite nicely. I don't see any problem at all with having an agency and a media arm in the same business. In B2B trade press and communications, it's a perfectly logical next step. It means we probably won't win a publishing award or a PR award, because no one quite knows where we fit, but I'm happy with that.

How do clients and partners benefit?

JUSTIN: By creating a strong independent media brand like NDA, which has a large senior, influential audience, it's a place where our clients will want to be.

Our PR arm makes sure our clients are present in all the other great publications in the market. But, at the same time, we've created our own media, which is of equal or sometimes higher value than the other media outlets.

How is the company growing?

ANDY: We recently launched a second media title, Ecommerce Age. It's an exciting and fast-moving area of technology that is impacting everyone's lives and there is space in the market for a new dedicated title. We're also launching Bluestripe Connect. We can do the media outreach for clients, we can create their content, we can put it in our own media. The last part is helping our brilliant clients and partners make true business connections. Bluestripe Connect, a lead generation business that will launch this month, will do exactly that.



We bring different backgrounds, different approaches, different opinions and different ways of doing things

What are the company's biggest achievements so far?

Andy: The size of the clients we've attracted. These are industry-leading and shaping companies that trust us to do a good job and aren't afraid of a company using a new model.

Lydia: Doubling in size last year, despite the difficult environment, and the way we've developed 'Practice Makes Unperfect' with Amy Kean. With the course, we're developing the speakers of the future.

We're recruiting

Bluestripe is no ordinary communications company and that means we don't need ordinary staff. We need the storytellers, the multi-taskers and the multi-skilled. We need the thinkers and the doers, the hunters and the gatherers.

We're currently recruiting in our PR and editorial departments for exceptional individuals who want to be part of a growing team.



*Zebra herds are hugely social.
They eat together, protect each other and help each other.*

For more information, please contact
andy.oakes@bluestripegroup.co.uk

Bluestripe Connect

Bluestripe Connect is a commercial strategy and business acceleration service that supports adtech businesses' growth through a unique combination of commercial and communications consultancy and execution.

It brings together experienced consultants and practitioners in the adtech marketplace to help businesses build, develop and communicate their commercial propositions.

Unlike traditional business development offerings, Bluestripe Connect seamlessly integrates commercial strategy and communications, helping businesses to develop their proposition, communicate it to their target audience and close the loop with active lead generation.

*Zebra foals can stand six minutes after birth.
Because you don't want to hang around*



For more information, please contact
ellie.edwards@bluestripegroup.co.uk

NDA

New Digital Age, published by Bluestripe Group, covers all aspects of digital media and marketing. We're a source of knowledge and inspiration about the companies, technologies and people powering our industry. We're owned by Bluestripe Group and will include news and views from across the industry which we find interesting and that adds value to our audience, including content from our clients.

editorial@newdigitalage.co.uk

newdigitalage.co